Preserving Digital Public Television (http://www.ptvdigitalarchive.org/)

A project funded by the National Digital Infrastructure Information and Preservation Program (NDIIPP) of the Library of Congress.

"By nature and necessity, public broadcasting is a hodgepodge of media types and formats. A documentary might include moving and still images, speeches and voice-overs, sound effects, or a song. Children's programming might include a combination of live action, cartoons, musical numbers, and kaleidoscopic effects. Source material for any of these production elements might be analog (a strip of film, a track from a 78-rpm phonograph record) or digital (panoramic portraits, credit rolls, logos). In whatever manifestations these objects previously existed, they become bits and bytes before they reach the public eye. That is an enormous amount of digital information to manage over time. As we move into the increasingly complex digital world, those charged with preserving our television heritage have the opportunity to develop and establish better coordinated and standardized preservation policies and practices to ensure what television programs and related assets survive."

> Mary Ide, Dave MacCarn, Thom Shepard, and Leah Weisse
> "Understanding the Preservation Challenge of Digital Television"
> Building a National Strategy for Preservation: Issues in Digital Media Archiving
> Council on Library and Information Resources and the Library of Congress, April 2002

Project's Purpose

Although the need to preserve public television content on analog tape remains critical, there are enormous challenges arising in the digital arena. The changes in television production in the last few years have been profound, and we are rapidly approaching a tape-less production and distribution environment – where programs will live solely as "disembodied" digital assets, attached to their metadata. This introduces an entirely new set of issues and problems relating to long-term program preservation, for which no coordinated strategy yet exists in public television.

On Sept. 30, 2004, the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program announced its first formal partners by making cooperative agreements with eight groups to begin building a digital preservation network. The Preserving Digital Public Television project is a partnership between the two largest public television station producers (WNET in New York and WGBH in Boston), PBS, and New York University. The public television partners on this project, bring an unparalleled capacity, expertise, technical resources, facilities and personnel to the arena of digital video production and preservation. NYU brings both it's digital library expertise, and the digital video preservation expertise from its Masters Degree program in Moving Image Archiving and Preservation. Working together, this project is taking the first important steps to establish standards, procedures and structures to preserve major public television assets – both complete programs and program elements – which are being created, produced, distributed and preserved completely in digital forms, and which will have long term historical and cultural value to the public. At this point in time the public broadcasting system is also grappling with adopting technical standards and procedures for such operational functions as digital distribution of programs for broadcast, and has already been looking at some of these questions. It is a logical extension of this ongoing process to plan a preservation strategy at the same time. The key is designing a preservation repository that the public television system can afford to maintain and use. Our tasks are aimed at designing a model repository based on deciding criteria both for what will go into the repository and how it will function.

This project is nearing the end of its initial three-year phase. By September 2007, we will have:
- An inventory of our at-risk materials to prepare for selection;
- Ingested 20 hours of sample materials and tested the model repository.
- Recommendations for metadata standards, and a METS profile for digital video.
- Plans for operational and business requirements of the digital repository.
- Acted as advocates, voicing our concerns to leaders in the public television industry and Congress.

Project Partners

- **Thirteen/WNET – TV, New York** – A major producer of national programming for public television and lead institution for Preserving Digital Public Television. http://www.thirteen.org/index.php
- **WGBH – TV, Boston** – A major producer for public television and a leader in planning video preservation. http://www.wgbh.org/
- **WGBH Archives** – features a selection of older series that have been remastered and related archival materials. http://www.wgbh.org/resources/archives
- **Public Broadcasting Service** – with links to information and resources on hundreds of program series and television productions aired nationally. http://www.pbs.org/
- **New York University Moving Image Archiving and Preservation Program** – part of the Tisch School of the Arts, this 2-year academic program conducts research and awards Masters Degrees in film and video preservation. http://www.nyu.edu/tisch/preservation/
- **New York University Digital Libraries** – with information on university projects preserving important media and cultural materials. http://library.nyu.edu/diglib/
- **Library of Congress Digital Preservation Activities** – planning and background materials, grants, and related initiatives. http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/

Presentations

At the Spring 2007 CNI Task Force Meeting we will report on two important areas of our work:.

James Bullen of New York University Digital Libraries will discuss developments in repository architecture. NYU is currently developing a digital preservation repository, built around DSpace, which is intended to archive materials in many different formats. This development provides the basis for designing the model repository for preserving digital public television. Our prototyping has raised some interesting challenges, such as; dealing with very large video files, working with proprietary file formats and acquiring metadata from production work flows. In this session we will outline the repository design and discuss our approaches to some of these problems, including the use of Storage Resource Broker (SRB), Kepler, MXF, METS and PBCore.

Howard Besser and Kara Van Malssen of NYU's Moving Image Archiving and Preservation Program will report on the issue of public television metadata lifecycle management, highlighting the need for conscious metadata creation to become part of normal workflow during content production. Drawing on a study of public television workflow conducted in 2006, it reports on ways metadata might be captured from existing resources within the television production process, and ingested into a preservation repository. The authors identify areas in the workflow where small changes may yield significant improvements for preservation and curation of assets. This report also proposes methods by which producers and custodians of cultural content can work together to ensure the longevity of digital information, and outlines further studies that might turn these preliminary studies into standard practice.